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Committee for Programme and Coordination
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Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-fifth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Item 7

Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate

1. At its 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th meetings, on 6, 7 and 9 June 2005, the Committee considered agenda item 7, entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate".

2. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it a compilation of relevant extracts from the reports of the Committee on its thirty-eighth to forty-fourth sessions, as well as the various proposals put forward by delegations at its forty-fourth session. The Committee held nine rounds of informal consultations and a number of "informal informal" consultations to consider proposals that had been put forward during informal consultations.

Discussion

3. Delegations recalled that in paragraph 18 of its resolution 58/269 of 23 December 2003 entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", the General Assembly had invited the Committee to submit, at its forty-fourth session, recommendations on improving its effectiveness. Also recalled was paragraph 25 of Assembly resolution 59/275 of 23 December 2004 entitled "Programme planning", in which the Assembly had welcomed the decision of the

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Committee to revert to the agenda item entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate", as a matter of priority, at the beginning of its forty-fifth session.

4. It was pointed out that over the past years, there had been an interesting exchange of views on the working methods, but that no substantial negotiations on recommendations had been achieved. The present session provided an opportunity to work on those issues in a results-oriented manner. It was also stated that in light of the overall efforts to reform and streamline the bodies of the United Nations, the improvement of the working methods of the Committee should not be put aside. Optimizing the fulfilment of the Committee's coordination function was emphasized. The view was expressed that despite efforts made by delegations during the forty-fourth session, the Committee had not been able to fulfil its mandate owing to a lack of will among some member delegations to engage on this issue. The main session of the Fifth Committee during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly had provided a second opportunity to examine this issue but there had been no noticeable outcome.

5. During the course of the discussions, views were expressed that measures for improving the working methods of the Committee needed to be practical and realistic and cognizant of the different cycles of the Committee in the budget and off-budget years.

6. Delegates stressed the importance of the timely submission of documentation and the strict implementation of relevant resolutions on the issuance of documentation in accordance with the six-week rule so as to facilitate the preparatory and decision-making process of the Committee. Views were expressed that in order to allow proper preparation by delegations, the consideration of reports that had not been issued by the time of the organizational session should be deferred.

7. Views were expressed on the importance of the role of the Bureau and it was proposed that the outgoing Bureau should meet with the incoming Bureau shortly after its term began to share its experiences and facilitate the preparations for the forthcoming session. It was also pointed out that the Bureau should establish and enforce clear deadlines for the submission of draft proposals: they should be distributed to delegations at least 24 hours before an issue was taken up in informals.

8. It was pointed out that there was a need for more interactive discussion with programme managers, with the focus on existing mandates, particularly during the consideration of programme performance reports. The Committee needed to have an interactive debate with programme managers when considering the plan outline of the strategic framework. Views were also expressed regarding time limits for the presentations by the Secretariat. It was also pointed out that programme managers who were not based at Headquarters should make their presentation through videoconferencing.

9. The view was expressed that it would be useful for the Committee to devote the first day of its session to informal briefings for members and observer delegations on the technical issues to be addressed by the Committee.

10. It was proposed that during budget years, the Committee should evaluate the programme narratives of the proposed programme budget, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/269, as well as reports on evaluation and reports of the Joint Inspection Unit.

11. In off-budget years, the Committee would consider, inter alia, the strategic framework and programme performance reports.

12. Views were also expressed that the formal discussions of the strategic framework should be scheduled in clusters corresponding to parts of the budget.

13. It was also proposed that the session should consist of two segments. In the first segment, on coordination and evaluation, the Committee would produce concrete recommendations on how to improve system-wide coordination and programme performance and present them to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. This segment would cover current agenda items on evaluation, the report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, and other coordination reports, and the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit. In the second segment, on programme planning, the Committee would, in off-budget years, review the proposed strategic framework and present recommendations to the Assembly. In budget years, the Committee would review the programmatic aspects of the new and/or revised mandates, as well as any differences that might have arisen between the biennial programme plan and the programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget, according to Assembly resolution 58/269.

14. It was also proposed that, in order to enhance the Committee's role in evaluation, to afford more time for intergovernmental bodies to review evaluation reports and to devote more time to the strategic framework, evaluation reports should be considered during budget years, when the Committee would not be reviewing the strategic framework.

15. It was further pointed out that it was too early to take an informed decision on whether or not the session of the Committee during the budget years might be shortened without preventing it from performing its programmatic role in the planning and budgeting process, as reaffirmed in General Assembly resolutions 58/269 and 57/300 of 20 December 2002. Consideration could be given to reverting to the resumed session during the off-budget year when the strategic framework was submitted to the Committee. In this connection, it was proposed that the first session could concentrate on the strategic framework while the resumed session could consider the programme performance report and monitoring of the evaluation aspects. Views were also expressed that in order to better reflect the Committee's mandates, the session should meet for two weeks during budget years and for four weeks during non-budget years.

16. The view was expressed that there was scope for improvements with respect to the format of the Committee report. The view was expressed that the current "conclusions and recommendations" section should give overall direction to the Secretariat. The discussion part of the various programmes should be retained to give a short historical record of the discussions. Views were also expressed that the reports of the Committee should be prepared in a reader-friendly format, should be restricted to conclusions and recommendations, and should not contain a complete account of the discussion. The Committee should concentrate on presenting agreed

changes to objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators, as well as substantive recommendations to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

17. On the question of observers, views were expressed that their participation should be welcomed inasmuch as it would enrich the deliberations of the Committee. Views were also expressed that, in formal meetings, observers could be invited to present a statement or questions in writing. Observer delegations would be invited to attend informal meetings but not encouraged to make interventions thereat.

18. It was also pointed out that the secretariat of the Committee should ensure that the recommendations of the Committee were communicated to the various departments of the Secretariat, following the adoption of the report of the Committee by the General Assembly.